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Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR CALLS ON MINISTER OF EDUCATION

UISA FOR IEU

1. SUMMARY: MILAN VONDRUSKA, PROLETARIAN AND ROUGH-EDGED MINISTER OF EDUCATION, WELCOMED ME ON INITIAL CALL JULY 28. OUR NOT ENTIRELY DESULTORY CONVERSATION FOCUSSED MAINLY ON CZECH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, DIFFICULTIES IN US-GOC EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, AND CSCE. END SUMMARY.

2. VONDRUSKA OPENED BY SAYING THE MINISTRY'S MAIN GOALS ARE TO PROVIDE PRESCHOOLS FOR 80 PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY'S POPULATION UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE AND TO CONCENTRATE FUTURE EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS ON TECHNICAL EDUCATION. TRADITIONAL CZECH EMPHASIS ON ARTS AND HUMANITIES HAS BEEN CURBED HE SAID, ACKNOWLEDGING, IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, THAT THIS WOULD CONTINUE TO REQUIRE "MUCH STRUGGLE." THE OTHER GOAL OF CZECH EDUCATION IS TO TURN OUT "GOOD SOCIALISTS, PATRIOTS, AND INTERNATIONALISTS."

3. AS FOR EDUCATIONAL COOPERATION WITH US, THE MINISTER SAID THE GOC PREFERS TO INCREASE ITS PROGRAM STEP BY STEP, BUILDING ON THE IREX PROGRAM, WHICH HAS BEEN WORKING INFORMALLY FOR SEVERAL YEARS, AND WHICH HE HOPES CURRENT EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE TALKS WILL NOW RATIFY. BEYOND THAT, HE HAD NO SUGGESTIONS. WHEN ASKED BY PAO ABOUT REVIVING A LONG-DORMANT MANAGEMENT EXPERTS
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EXCHANGE WITH NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, THE MINISTER, WITH PRODDING

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FROM AN ASSOCIATE, SAID THIS PROGRAM NOW HAS THE MINISTRY'S GO-AHEAD. WHEN IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT 10 MONTHS TRANSPIRED BETWEEN THE TIME USG PROPOSED AN ADDITIONAL FULBRIGHT LECTURER IN ENGLISH FOR BRNO AND THE TIME HIS MINISTRY TURNED IT DOWN, THE MINISTER'S RESPONSE WAS THAT A TEN-MONTH DELAY IS INDEED TOO LONG.

4. AT ONE POINT, I EXPRESSED HOPE TO HAVE A MORE DETAILED DISCUSSION WITH THE MINISTER "OVER A BEER." SUDDENLY, THERE WAS A HURRIED CONCLAVE AT THE MINISTER'S SIDE OF THE TABLE AND THE DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL DIVISION WAS SENT SCURRYING FOR A TRAYFUL OF BEERS. THE DIRECTOR, ONCE HIS ERRAND WAS ACCOMPLISHED, WAS ASKED BY THE MINISTER TO ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT GOC IMPLEMENTATION OF CSCE BASKET 3 TEXTS, ESPECIALLY IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD. WHEN THE DIRECTOR BEGAN HIS EXPLANATION, IT WAS APPARENT THAT THE MINISTER WAS TOTALLY UNPREPARED TO DISCUSS CSCE AND HIS DISCOMFORT OVER ANY EXTENDED CONVERSATION ON THIS TOPIC WAS PAINFULLY OBVIOUS.
AT MY SUGGESTION, HE GLADLY AGREED THAT DR. KUBRYCHT AND I COULD MEET AT ANOTHER TIME TO DISCUSS IT. THE MINISTER, WHO GREW UP IN THE SAME BOHEMIAN REGION THE BEER HE SERVED CAME FROM, WAS MORE AT HOME IN DISCUSSING THAT PART OF THE COUNTRY AND THE SUPERIORITY OF BUDVAR BEER OVER PILSEN BEER. HE HAD TAUGHT IN AGRICULTURAL AND TEACHERS' SCHOOLS IN SOUTHERN BOHEMIA BEFORE BEING NAMED IDEOLOGICAL SECRETARY OF THE SOUTH BOHEMINA REGIONAL PARTY COMMITTEE SEVERAL YEARS AGO. HE COMPLETES ONE YEAR IN HIS NEW JOB THIS OCTOBER.

5. COMMENT: WHILE THIS MEETING BROKE LITTLE NEW GROUND, THE MINISTER DID SAY THE GOC WANTS TO MOVE AHEAD DELIBERATELY ON A STEP-BY-STEP BASIS IN IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL RELATIONS WITH THE US, PARTUCLARLY BY BUILDING ON THE IREX PROGRAM. HE EXPLAINED THAT OUR PROPOSAL FOR AN ADDITIONAL FULBRIGHT LECTURER IN BRNO HAD BEEN TURNED DOWN BECAUSE THE FACULTY PREFERS A PROFESSOR WITH A BRITISH ACCENT. MOST POSITIVE RESULT OF THE MEETING WAS REVIVAL OF THE LONG-DORMANT NYU-PRAGUE UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT EXCHANGES PROGRAM. OVERALL, THE ENCOUNTER WAS A STEP FORWARD FROM SIMILAR MINISTRY MEETINGS OF THE RECENT PAST.
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